

108TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. RES. 208

Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives regarding the systematic human rights violations in Cuba committed by the Castro regime and calling for the immediate removal of Cuba from the United Nations Commission on Human Rights.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APRIL 30, 2003

Mr. FOLEY (for himself, Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN, Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida, Mr. DELAY, Mr. BLUNT, Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART of Florida, Ms. PRYCE of Ohio, Mr. CRENSHAW, Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida, Mr. FEENEY, Mr. KELLER, Mr. MILLER of Florida, Mr. PUTNAM, Mr. DEUTSCH, Mr. MICA, Mr. SHIMKUS, Mr. PAUL, Mr. GARRETT of New Jersey, Mr. MORAN of Kansas, Mr. NETHERCUTT, Mr. ISAKSON, Mr. REYNOLDS, and Ms. HARRIS) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on International Relations

RESOLUTION

Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives regarding the systematic human rights violations in Cuba committed by the Castro regime and calling for the immediate removal of Cuba from the United Nations Commission on Human Rights.

Whereas the Cuban Government remains one of the last bastions of hard-line Communism in the world;

Whereas Fidel Castro and his government have engaged in deliberate and systematic acts of torture and human rights violations since coming to power in 1959;

Whereas since 1959 there have been countless human rights violations committed by the Castro government;

Whereas on January 3, 2002, police arrested Milagros Zeneida Morales of the Independent Workers Labor Union on charges of recruiting members for a counterrevolutionary organization;

Whereas on January 30, 2002, the Havana Provincial Court sentenced activist Carlos Oquendo Rodriguez to 2 years imprisonment for “contempt for authority” and “public disorder”; the provincial court confirmed the sentence levied against Oquendo Rodriguez by a municipal court in 2001 and appealed by him to the provincial court; and prior to sentencing, police officials offered to suspend Oquendo Rodriguez’ sentence if he recanted his political beliefs, but Oquendo Rodriguez refused;

Whereas on February 21, 2002, political prisoner Ariel Fleitas Gonzalez advised relatives that prison authorities had placed a dangerous common criminal in his cell in Canaleta prison to monitor his activities, and that prisoner threatened Fleitas Gonzalez when the latter called upon officials to respect prisoners’ rights;

Whereas in late February 2002, police arrested at least 300 persons near the Mexican Embassy after 21 asylum seekers used a bus to break through the gates of the embassy; many of those arrested were reportedly bystanders not involved in the embassy intrusion; rapid response brigades (RRBs) summoned by the Government to the Mexican Embassy beat some bystanders; most bystanders were interrogated and released, but on March 6th, Fidel Castro indicated that 130 of them would be tried on charges related to the embassy break-in; and, according

to relatives, approximately 60 remained jailed at year's end and none had been tried;

Whereas on March 4, 2002, state security agents, police, and civilian members of an RRB beat blind activist Juan Carlos Gonzalez Leyva, independent journalist Carlos Brizuela Yera, and 8 other activists, who were at a public hospital in Ciego de Avila protesting the earlier beating of independent journalist Jesus Alvarez Castillo; police forcibly removed the protesters from the hospital and arrested them; on August 21st, a municipal court charged them with "contempt for authority, public disorder, disobedience, and resistance"; prosecutors requested a 6-year sentence for Gonzalez Leyva; and Gonzalez Leyva protested his imprisonment through a liquids-only fast, and at year's end weighed less than 100 pounds;

Whereas on March 13, 2002, police arrested 7 human rights activists in Nueva Gerona, Isle of Youth, as they conducted a public demonstration calling for democratic reforms and the release of political prisoners;

Whereas on March 18, 2002, state security officials arrested 4 leaders of the Brotherhood of Blind Cubans to prevent a demonstration against police mistreatment of handicapped street vendors and calling for the release of blind dissident Juan Carlos Gonzalez Leyva; police released the 4 after citing them with "official warnings";

Whereas on April 17, 2002, police arrested Barbaro Vela Coego and Armando Dominguez Gonzalez, president and vice president, respectively, of the January 6 Civic Movement, to prevent their attendance at a fast in honor of political prisoners; they were held for 2 hours and released;

Whereas on April 21, 2002, members of an RRB beat Grisel Almaguer Rodriguez of the Political Prisoners Association as she departed the home of human rights activist Elizardo Sanchez Santa Cruz;

Whereas on April 22, 2002, police arrested Milka Pena Martinez of the Cuban Pro Human Rights Party for protesting a police search of her home; police also arrested Luis Ferrer Garcia of the Christian Liberation Movement, who was present at the time, and Ramon Collazo Almaguer, who led a group of dissidents to Pena Martinez' home to protest her arrest; Pena Martinez was fined and all 3 were released;

Whereas on May 17, 2002, police went to the home of Pedro Veliz, president of the Independent Medical School of Cuba, and instructed him to leave Havana for the day to prevent his attendance at ceremonies marking the founding of a pre-revolutionary political party; Veliz, along with his wife and children, were forced to leave their home and were followed by state security officials until they left the city;

Whereas on May 19, 2002, police arrested Nereida Cala Escalona and Evelio Manteira Barban as they departed a meeting in Santiago de Cuba organized by the Christian Liberation Movement; they were interrogated, threatened with imprisonment, and released on May 20th;

Whereas on May 25, 2002, police beat and arrested 4 members of the Cuban Pro Human Rights Party affiliated with the Andrei Sakharov Foundation who were on their way to a mass in honor of a dissident figure; the 4 were searched, threatened with imprisonment, fined, and released;

Whereas in early June 2002, common prisoner Hector Labrada Ruedas died of internal bleeding after prison authorities refused his requests for medical attention;

Whereas on June 1, 2002, police arrested 9 activists as they departed a human rights course at the illegal NGO Culture and Democracy Institute in Santiago de Cuba; they were interrogated and released on June 2nd;

Whereas on June 1, 2002, police in Havana province entered the neighborhood of Buena Esperanza to remove persons from the eastern provinces living in the area without authorization; an unknown number of men were removed in trucks on that date, while women and children were given 72 hours to depart;

Whereas on June 7, 2002, police arrested 3 members of the 30th of November Party in Santiago de Cuba; they were interrogated and released on June 10th;

Whereas on June 7, 2002, police forcefully removed 17 persons from the home of activist Migdalia Rosado Hernandez, where the group was commemorating the second anniversary of the Tamarindo 34 hunger strike; the police took 14 persons far from their homes and abandoned them by the roadside; 3 others were fined and released;

Whereas on June 14, 2002, state security officials beat and arrested independent journalist Carlos Serpa Maceira while he was covering a march by human rights activists in the Isle of Youth; he was briefly detained, fined 1,200 pesos, and then released;

Whereas on June 20, 2002, a guard at Las Ladrilleras prison in Holguin province instructed a common prisoner to beat political prisoner Daniel Mesa; Mesa reportedly suffered brain damage as a result of the attack;

Whereas on June 24, 2002, police blocked access to the home of activist Francisco Moure Saladriga to prevent a meeting of members of the Cuban Human Rights Party scheduled for that day;

Whereas in July 2002, prison officials in Ceramica Roja prison denied religious visits to political prisoner Enrique Garcia Morejon of the Christian Liberation Movement; Garcia Morejon twice requested visits by a Catholic priest while the priest was visiting other prisoners;

Whereas in July 2002, state security officials arrested independent journalist Yoel Blanco Garcia and took him to a local firehouse where he was interrogated; the state security officials warned Blanco Garcia not to visit the home of Martha Beatriz Roque, director of the Cuban Institute of Independent Economists;

Whereas on July 24, 2002, police arrested human rights activist Adolfo Lazaro Bosq at a vigil for political prisoners on charges of “resistance and contempt for the revolutionary process”; on August 2nd, a municipal court sentenced him to 1 year and 9 months imprisonment;

Whereas on July 29, 2002, state security officials arrested Rogelio Menendez Diaz, president of the Cuban Municipalities for Human Rights; he was held for 35 days in Villa Marista prison, where guards transferred him between chilled and heated cells; during interrogations, Menendez Diaz was accused of organizing clandestine cells on behalf of exile groups along with activists Angel Pablo Polanco and Marcel Valenzuela Salt, who had also been detained; Menendez Diaz was charged with “contempt against the Commander in Chief” and warned to cease opposition activities; he was released on September 2nd, but rearrested on December 10th, apparently to pre-

vent his participation in events commemorating International Human Rights Day; at year's end, he had not been tried and remained jailed;

Whereas on July 30, 2002, state security officials arrested independent journalist Angel Pablo Polanco and held him for 4 days in an unregistered house of detention; Polanco was 60 years old and moved with the aid of a walker; during a search of his home, state security agents removed a fax machine and a telephone, which Polanco had purchased from a state company, \$1,200 in cash, a tape recorder, books on Cuban history, and files related to his work as a journalist; the officials did not provide a receipt for the money or the items; Polanco was charged with inciting others to commit "contempt of authority" and "insulting the symbols of the State", apparently in connection with plans by opposition groups to mark the August 5th anniversary of riots in Havana that occurred in 1994; he was accused of organizing clandestine cells along with activists Manuel Menendez Diaz and Marcel Valenzuela Salt, who had been arrested on July 29th; Polanco was granted conditional release on August 3rd; at year's end, Polanco had not been tried;

Whereas in August 2002, 6 guards at Guamajal prison, Villa Clara province, beat common prisoner Pedro Rafael Perez Fuentes until he was unconscious; Perez Fuentes told his mother that the guards had beaten him because he had asked them why he had been denied exercise privileges; the prison warden verbally abused Perez Fuentes' mother when she informed him of her plans to report the assault;

Whereas on August 6, 2002, prison officials, including the chief of political reeducation, beat political prisoner

Yosvani Aguilar Camejo; Aguilar Camejo is the national coordinator for the Fraternal Brothers for Dignity Movement; he was arrested at the time of the Mexican Embassy break-in by asylum seekers in late February;

Whereas on August 16, 2002, Juan Sanchez Picoto died in a psychiatric hospital in San Luis de Jagua, allegedly by suicide; according to family members, Sanchez Picoto had tried to emigrate 9 times since 1998, and after the last attempt the authorities forcibly removed him from his home and placed him in a psychiatric unit for alcoholics at a Guantanamo psychiatric hospital; he was held in a ward for violent and mentally ill offenders, despite a doctor's diagnosis that he did not meet criteria for involuntary commitment; he was allegedly given shock therapy and assaulted by another detainee, resulting in a head injury; on August 15th, he was transferred from the Guantanamo hospital to the San Luis de Jagua unit and died the next day; family members were not allowed to see the body;

Whereas on September 11, 2002, police arrested Luis Milan of the Christian Liberation Movement for writing a letter to municipal officials in Santiago de Cuba calling for improved prison conditions;

Whereas on September 17, 2002, plainclothes police beat 59-year-old Rafael Madlum Payas of the Christian Liberation Movement as he approached a police station to inquire about the cases of 7 activists being held at the station;

Whereas on September 21, 2002, persons directed by state security officials threw stones and mud at the home of Jose Daniel Ferrer of the Christian Liberation Movement and beat Victor Rodriguez Vazquez and Yordanis

Almenares Crespo, who were visiting Ferrer at the time of the attack;

Whereas on September 24, 2002, police in Santiago province directed persons to beat 6 members of the Christian Liberation Movement during an act of rapid repudiation;

Whereas on December 6, 2002, police arrested Dr. Oscar Elias Biscet, a political prisoner who had been released on October 31st after serving 3 years for alleged disrespect, allegedly creating a public disturbance, and allegedly encouraging others to violate the law; the dictatorship arrested Biscet and 16 others to prevent them from holding a seminar on nonviolent civil disobedience; the dictatorship later released 12 of the detainees, but charged Biscet, his associate Raul Arencibia Fajardo, and 2 others with public disorder;

Whereas on December 7, 2002, Leonardo Brúzon, President of the unofficial Movimiento Pro Derechos Humanos 24 de Feberero (24 February Human Rights Movement), began a hunger strike; 4 days later, he was transferred to the Combinado del Este prison as punishment for this, despite his ill state of health; his family reports that he is currently being held in an isolation cell, 3 meters by 3 meters; they claim his cell is continually wet due to leakage from a drainage pipe overhead; he has also been threatened with having his right to fresh air and family visits suspended;

Whereas in recent weeks, the dictatorship has carried out its most brutal repression in decades; and

Whereas on April 11, 2003, 3 hijackers (Lorenzo Enrique Copello, Bárbaro Leodán Sevilla, and Jorge Luis Martínez) were executed after being convicted of ter-

rorism; another 4 hijackers received life sentences, while 4 others received shorter prison terms: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the House of Representatives—

2 (1) condemns the brutal crackdown of the
3 Cuban Government on its own men, women, and
4 children;

5 (2) calls on the United Nations Commission on
6 Human Rights to recognize the resolution recently
7 passed by the House of Representatives condemning
8 Cuba for its human rights atrocities; and

9 (3) condemns the member states of the United
10 Nations Economic and Social Council for renewing
11 Cuba's membership on the United Nations Commis-
12 sion on Human Rights.

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